



Commonwealth of Kentucky Public Protection Cabinet

Matthew G. Bevin, Governor

David A. Dickerson, Secretary

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Gov. Matt Bevin Consolidates Boards for Greater Productivity, Efficiency *Crime victims, boards of claims & tax appeals now Kentucky Claims Commission*

Frankfort, Ky. (Aug. 8, 2016) – As part of Gov. Matt Bevin’s effort to reduce government inefficiency, Kentuckians will soon have a single administrative body to oversee tax appeals, crime victim compensation claims and negligence claims against the state. This strategic move continues efforts to streamline state government and create efficiency. The move will also save \$350,000 annually.

The Executive Order entered this week creates the new Kentucky Claims Commission and abolishes the Kentucky Board of Claims, Board of Tax Appeals and the Crime Victims Compensation Board. The new commission will take effect on October 1 and will be reviewed by the General Assembly during its 2017 session.

“This reorganization will benefit Kentuckians in a number of ways,” said Gov. Bevin.

“Consolidating these agencies will reduce costs and make funds available to reduce a \$2 million backlog of payments to crime victims and to healthcare providers who conduct sexual assault examinations. Rather than pay excessive salaries to board members, this money will be used to compensate victims. It’s an easy and prudent decision that will benefit Kentuckians.”

Victims’ advocates work within Commonwealth Attorney’s offices around the state to help crime victims and their families through the aftermath of a crime.

“Kentucky’s Crime Victims’ Compensation Fund has been woefully underfunded for years. Increasing crime victim compensation through streamlining government services is much needed and long overdue,” said Rob Sanders, president, Kentucky Commonwealth’s Attorneys Association and Kenton County Commonwealth’s Attorney. “The addition of increased funding for the collection of rape kits makes this move a home run for public safety.”

The Executive Order reduces the collective number of board members from eight to three, one of whom must be a crime victim, crime victim advocate or a family member of a crime victim. All members will be appointed by the governor and must be confirmed by the Senate.

"This is one more example of improving systems that will encourage more victims to report sexual assault. With the recent passage of SB 63, the SAFE Act of 2016, hospitals are encouraged to have a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner on call to collect evidence and provide medical care for victims requesting a sexual assault kit at the emergency department," said Eileen Recktenwald, executive director of the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs (KASAP). "This new Executive Order will streamline the process of reimbursing health care providers for their crisis response to victims. KASAP also appreciates the assurance that victims are represented on the new Commission."

Past board members were given extravagant salary and benefits packages that cost taxpayers nearly \$370,000 annually. Today's order reduces this compensation package by roughly \$270,000. Other anticipated cost savings will result from reduced salary expense for executive staff, consolidation of office space and a reduction in the need for outside contractors.

"This new organizational structure is in line with the governor's efforts to streamline and accelerate a process that will result in faster, less expensive and better service for Kentuckians," concluded Public Protection Cabinet Secretary David A. Dickerson.

Kentucky legislators are responding positively to the newly created commission. "I applaud the administration's efforts to make changes to expedite our ability to serve those who have been violated and victimized," said Sen. Alice Forgy Kerr, R-Lexington. "The Kentucky Claims Commission directs money saved through this restructuring to crime victims and it creates a stronger financial commitment to helping victims recover."

"Helping victims of crime, especially those in sexual assault cases, is a priority of mine. This plan will provide almost immediate financial relief to about 300 crime victims who have been waiting to settle their claims," continued Sen. Denise Harper-Angel, D-Louisville. "I commend this effort to speed up the claims process and direct more money to help crime victims. This restructuring compliments my Senate Bill 63, which established policies and procedures for the swift and proper handling of sexual assault evidence kits. This restructuring will expedite compensation to victims of crime."

"As a former U.S. Marshal Service employee, I commend Gov. Bevin on the creation of the Kentucky Claims Commission," said Rep. Donna Mayfield, R-Winchester. "I take very seriously the handling of the cases this commission will address, and believe this form of streamlined and efficient government is long overdue for the victims impacted. This is truly a step in the right direction for the Commonwealth."

Rep. Regina Bunch, R-Williamsburg, added "real savings from these funds will be put right back into the program to pay out claims. It's exactly what should be done to help crime victims."

"This consolidation will not only save the state \$350,000 annually, but will provide crime victims backlogged payments and will also allow sexual assault victims access to important resources, such as rape kits," said House Republican Whip Jim DeCesare, R-Bowling Green. "This is a common-sense move to serve Kentuckians better."

"As a former prosecutor I know how valuable the victims' compensation process is, and as a legislator I can readily see the examples of waste or redundancy in state government," said Sen. Whitney H. Westerfield, R-Hopkinsville. "Strengthening Kentucky's response to crime victims and eliminating costly, duplicative administrative hurdles for citizens in need at the same time is a worthy accomplishment. I applaud Gov. Bevin's ongoing efforts to provide better service to the taxpayers."

Editor's Note: The Executive Order is attached.

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